

LECTURES ON ARCHITECTURE AND ANTIQUITIES.*

Lecture II.

SELEUCIA, as was observed before, was built by Seleucus, one of Alexander's great captains, forty miles above Babylon, at the confluence of the Euphrates with the Tigris, by a canal. According to Pliny (Nat. Hist. b. vi. c. 26), it once contained 600,000 inhabitants, all the commerce and wealth of Babylon had flowed into it, and the soil around it was thought the most fertile in the world. Seleucia, when an independent Greek republic, had its senate of 300 nobles. It was sacked and fired by the Romans, A.D. 165, when 300,000 inhabitants were put to the sword. Of its present appearance, Captain Mignan furnishes us with an account. He says:—"Time, violence, and repeated inundations have levelled every thing. I looked in vain for monuments, pillars, aqueducts, and buildings. Bricks of every kind, mixed up with layers of straw, varnished tiles, and pottery of every colour (but chiefly blue), stones, shells, and a variety of vitreous and nitrous substances; these, and these alone, comprise what remains of the once magnificent Seleucia. There is not a single entire building, nothing but a small remnant of a wall and a few portions of decayed brickwork is left to mark the foot of the spoil, and bid us mourn in silence and solitude over fallen and departed grandeur."

One cause of the decay of Seleucia is ascribed by Pliny to the Parthians, who, in order to destroy it, imitated the plan of the Greeks, who built Seleucia to injure Babylon; the Parthians, therefore, built the city of Cranes, within a few miles of Seleucia, in order to dispeople and impoverish it. Captain Mignan describes a very magnificent ruin called "Tankers," or the arch of Chosroes. "The full extent of the eastern face is 300 feet; it is divided by a high semi-circular arch, supported by walls 16 feet thick, the arch itself making a span of 86 feet, and rising to the height of 103 feet. The front of the building is ornamented and surmounted by four rows of small arched recesses, resembling in form the large one. The style and execution of these are most delicate, evincing a fertile invention and great experience in the architectural art." M. de Brosses, a celebrated antiquary, supposes that Ctesiphon is the place where stood Calneb, mentioned in Genesis x. 10, as formerly part of Nimrod's kingdom. The natives of the country assert that the ruins are of the age of Nimrod. The riches contained in this venerable pile appear to have been immense. Gibbon, in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," (vol. ix. c. 51), describes the sack of Ctesiphon by the Saracens, A.D. 637, in the time of Caliph Omar, successor to Mahomet, in the following words:—"The capital was taken by assault, and the tumultuous resistance of the people gave a keener edge to the savages of the Moslems, who shouted 'in religious transport,' 'This is the white palace of Chosroes, this is the promise of the apostle of God.' The poor robbers of the desert were suddenly enriched beyond the measure of their hope or knowledge. Each chamber revealed new treasure, by art secreted or ostentatiously displayed. The gold and silver, the various wardrobe and costly furniture, surpassed the estimate of numbers and even of fancy itself. The sack of Ctesiphon was followed by its desertion and decay."

The last two places have been noticed out of chronological order, but as they arose from the ruin of Babylon, it appeared best to speak of them immediately after the account of that proud city.

NINEVEH, the celebrated capital of Assyria, was founded by Ninus (the husband of the famous Semiramis), who after his death received divine honours as the Jupiter of the Assyrians and the Hercules of the Chaldeans. Some writers suppose that Nimrod built Nineveh, as they read the 11th verse of Gen. x. thus, "Out of that land he" (i. e. Nimrod, mentioned in the three preceding verses) "went forth into Asshur" (or Assyria) "and built Nineveh." This city was built on the banks of

the Tigris, and, according to the relation of Diodorus, was 15 miles long, 9 miles broad, and 60 miles in circumference. It was surrounded by walls 100 feet high, broad enough for three chariots abreast, and defended by 1,600 towers, each 200 feet high. It rivalled Babylon in splendour and magnificence, as well as in extent, to which we may be easily reconciled by the knowledge that at the present day, within the inclosure of most of the great cities of the East, lie vacant spaces for gardens or for pasture, as was implied of Nineveh from the Scripture mention, that in it there was "also much cattle." (Jonah iv. 11.) The kings of Assyria or of Nineveh were noted for their luxury and extravagance, but little worth knowing is recorded of them from the time of Ninus (the son of Nimus) until the reign of Sardanapalus, the fortieth and last monarch. Before his time, Jonah the prophet was sent to warn the wicked city (whose inhabitants copied the evil habits of their kings) that it should be destroyed in forty days; but upon their repenting and humbling themselves in sackcloth and ashes, from "the greatest of them even unto the least of them," the city was spared. Jonah is believed to have lived between 810 and 765 a.c. This repentance appears not to have lasted long, for we find the prophets Zephaniah and Nahum foretelling the city's ultimate destruction. The former inspired writer, who flourished in the time of Jonah, about 630 a.c., thus predicts: "The Lord will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness; and socks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the merchant and the trader shall cease in the upper levels of it, their voice shall sing in the windows. Desolation shall be in the thresholds; for he shall uncover the cedar-work" (ch. ii. 13, 14). The whole book of the prophet Nahum is a "burden" against Nineveh, of which he says, "It shall come to pass that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say Nineveh is laid waste" (ch. iii. v. 7.) Belshazzar, the Babilonian high priest, and Arbaces, the Median, conspired against Sardanapalus, and besieged him for two years in his capital, when, despairing of success, that monarch made an immense pile in his palace and set fire to it, consuming himself, his wives, and his treasures. Diodorus says, "there was a prophecy handed down by tradition from their ancestors, that no one should ever take Nineveh by force till the river had first become an enemy to the city; but it came to pass in the third year that the Tigris being raised by most violent showers of rain of long continuance, overflowed a part of the city, and threw down about twenty furlongs of the wall. Then the king thinking that the oracle was accomplished, and that the river was now evidently become an enemy to the city, gave up all hope of saving himself." Two verses in the prophecy of Nahum are very striking with reference to the fact: "But with an overwhelming flood he" (the Lord) "will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies" (ch. i. v. 8); and again, "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace dissolved." (ch. ii. v. 6.) We learn also from Diodorus that "the Medians, under Arbaces, being informed by some deserters of the drunkenness and negligence which prevailed in the camp of the Assyrians, assaulted them unexpectedly in the night, and became masters of their camp." The prophet Nahum had foretold, "For while they are folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." (i. 10.) In the destruction of Nineveh vengeance was taken of the Assyrians for their captivity and cruel treatment of the tentrites of Israel. Of the present state that once uninvincible city, modern travellers of different ages inform us. Lucian, a native of Samosata, a town upon the Euphrates, who flourished in the second century, affirms that Nineveh was utterly perished, and that there was no footstep of it remaining. Benjamin of Tudela, who wrote his "Itinerary" in 1173, says that Nineveh is laid waste. Haiton, the Armenian, who wrote in the year 1200, says, "The city of Nineveh is at present totally in ruins. But by the remains which are still to be seen, one may be fully satisfied that

it was one of the greatest cities of the world." And Tavernier affirms that the ancient city Nineveh is now a heap of rubbish only, for a league along the river, full of vaults and caverns." (vol. ii. b. 2, a. 4.) The town of Mossoul, on the western bank of the Tigris, is supposed to be on the site of Nineveh, but its remains are literally no more than mounds of earth, extending over several miles; one of these is 178 feet high, 1,850 feet long, and 1,127 feet broad, as measured by Mr. Rich.

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(To be continued.)

RAILWAY BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29.

Railways.—Two petitions were presented from merchants and others interested in the conveyance of goods by railway, for securing a free competition in the carriage of goods.—To lie on the table.

On the motion of Col. Sibthorp, a return was ordered.—Of all moneys to be raised under the sanction of the acts whereby railroad companies had been incorporated, between the 1st day of January, 1828, and the 1st day of January, 1844; distinguishing the sums to be raised by loan or mortgage, and stating the several acts under which the said several sums are to be raised.

South Devon Railway.—A bill "for making a railway from Exeter to Plymouth; to be called 'the South Devon Railway,'" was presented, read a first time, and ordered to be read a second time.

Manchester and Birmingham (Macledale and Poplar Branches).—A bill for "enabling the Manchester and Birmingham Railway Company to vary the line of their branch railway to Macledale, and to make another branch therefrom, and for amending the former act relating to the said company," was presented, read a first time, and ordered to be read a second time.

Bolton and Preston Railway.—A bill "to effectuate the sale, by the Bolton and Preston Railway Company, of their railway, and other property and effects, to the North Union Railway Company, to incorporate with such last-mentioned company the proprietors of the Bolton and Preston Railway, and to consolidate share and stock," was presented, read a first time, and ordered to be read a second time.

Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway.—A bill "to authorize an extension of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway, and to amend and enlarge the provisions of the acts relating to such railway," was presented, read a first time, and ordered to be read a second time.

Leeds and Bradford Railway.—A bill "for making a railway from Leeds to Bradford, with a branch to the North Midland Railway," was presented, read a first time, and ordered to be read a second time.

Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Manchester Railway.—The standing orders committee reported a resolution, "That in the case of the Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne, and Manchester Railway petition, the standing orders ought to be dispensed with; that the parties be permitted to proceed with their bill on depositing in the Private Bill Office amended plans and sections, excluding from the limits of the deviation the particular portions of land not numbered, and rectifying the sectional error, so that the levels of two turnpike-roads and two public carriage-roads crossed by the railway between No. 130 and the plan and the termination of the railway at the collieries, be not affected; and that the committee on the bill do examine, in the first place, how far such order has been complied with, and do report the same to the house on the report of the bill." Resolution agreed to.

Newbury, Basingstoke, London, and Southampton Railway.—The standing orders committee reported "That in the case of the Newbury, Basingstoke, London, and Southampton Railway petition, the standing orders ought to be dispensed with; that the parties be permitted to proceed with their bill." Resolution agreed to.

* Lord Byron, in his drama "Sardanapalus," has followed the mistake of some of the early historians, in placing Nineveh on the Euphrates.

* Continued from page 40, Vol. I.